

Chapter 3

Formation of Cities and the State of Dvaravati

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Dvaravati refers to the early polities from the sixth to the ninth centuries in Thailand. Haripunjaya was also a northern faction of Dvaravati from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries that moved from Lavo, present Lopburi, in the central plain. Dvaravati means ‘gate to the port’ in Sanskrit [Saraya 1999: 50]. It is in *Chenshu* 陳書 (the book of Chen) that Dvaravati is referred to for the first time. It tells us that Touhe 頭和, that is Dvaravati, sent an embassy to the Chen Dynasty in 583. Although some Chinese texts, such as *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (the new book of Tang) and other histories, and Chinese pilgrims’ documents, refer to Dvaravati, there was no archaeological evidence to prove its existence until two silver coins, inscribed in Pallava letters, with *sridvaravatisvarnapunya* meaning ‘the merit of the Lord Dvaravati’, on them, found at the Buddhist temple Wat Phra Phrathon in Nakhon Pathom in 1943 [Boeles 1964: 231]. This type of coins were later found distributed in the west Chao Phraya River basin, such as U-Thong [Boisselier 1972: 52], Ban Khu Muang, and Dong Khong. This area seems to have been the centre of Dvaravati. Several scholars have published books and articles on the general view of Dvaravati [Dupont 1959; Quaritch-Wales 1966; Vallibhotama 1986; Saraya 1999; Indrawooth 1999, 2004]

Xin Tangshu provides important information on Dvaravati:

Dvaravati is situated south of Chenla, 100 days sail from Guangzhou. Its king’s family name is *Topolo*, and his first name is 脯邪迄遥. Many government officials such as military generals and civil servants administrate the national affairs. Its country is divided into three regions; province, county, and parish. Its military forces have generals. Each parish has a citadel with city wall. Each department has a director general. The officials selected by the government rule the common people. High buildings are in the capital, and their walls are decorated by wall paintings. 100 guards are defending the royal palace. People wear cloths. They pierce holes in the ears and insert gold rings or gold pendants in the holes. They also wear a gold necklace and leather sandals. Thief is

punished to death, or is pierced in the ears or the cheeks, and his hair is shaved. If they privately forge the silver coins, they will be cut off the arms. There is no tax, but people pay their products to the king. Agriculture and commerce are the most important industries. Silver coins are issued by the government. They look like Chinese ones. They mount elephants and horses not by using a saddle, and control them by a rope inserted into the holes of the cheeks. They used to express their mourning by cutting the hair when their parents die. After the body is cremated, they collect the bones and the ashes, and sink the urn containing them into the water. Dvaravati sent the embassy between 627 and 649 (translated by Nitta).

According to *Xin Tangshu*, Dvaravati was a systematic polity administrated by the government officials. They had military forces. The government controlled the financial policy by issuing coins. Criminal law was also practised.

1. Population Growth and Active Trading Activities before Dvaravati in Southeast Asia

Before the so-called ‘Indianization’ of Southeast Asia and the commencement of Dvaravati, Southeast Asian society started to develop all round from the fifth century BCE. Trade networks were widely spread, and the population grew and concentrated at the intersections of these networks. The elites were very fond of ornaments and regalia. Internal trade was very active for these commodities in Southeast Asia in the Iron Age (Fig. 3.1).

Raw materials to make ornaments were brought from a long distance. In the third century BCE, sea shells such as *tridana gigas* were transported from the coastal area to the inland. These shells are found in a coral reef in the southern sea. Some skeletons found at Ban Prasat, north-east Thailand, wore bracelets made of *tridacna gigas*, and those found at a site near Chaingmai, north Thailand, also wore similar bracelets. Ban Prasat was a cemetery in the third century BCE.

Another common raw material was the nephrite stone. Nephrite stones mined at the quarry in Fengtian 豊田, Taidong 台東, east Taiwan, were exported to Luzon, Palawan, Vietnam, and the Malay Peninsula, and were used to make special earrings such as the double-animal-headed ones of the Sa Huynh culture [Iizuka 2010: 61-62]. Earrings of this type were also carried to a wide area in Southeast Asia from central Vietnam.

Some regalia also moved widely in Southeast Asia. For instance, bronze drums were one of the most favourite regalia of the elites in Southeast Asia in the Iron Age. Bronze drums of Heger 1 type were widely distributed in Southeast Asia from the

fourth century BCE to the second century CE. They were transported from the inland to the islands such as the Moluccas and the Chendrawasi Peninsula, west of New Guinea. Some drums were locally made in the marginal area of its distribution [Nitta 2010]. Chinese artisans might have moved here to cast drums because a drum found on Sangean Island, East Indonesia, was decorated with Chinese motifs and Chinese letters were cast on its tympanum. *Tongge* 銅戈 (bronze halberd) was also respected by the elites of Southeast Asia and distributed from north Vietnam to south Vietnam, Laos, and northeast Thailand [Kobayashi 2006].

Khao Sam Kheo site is very important to understand the internal and international trade before the Indianization. It occupied the strategic point near the Kra Isthmus on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, and was enclosed by ramparts to protect it from burglars and enemies [Bellina and Glover 2004; Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2004]. There have found many kinds of imports from Southeast Asia, China, and India such as bronze drums, Indian glass beads, stone seals with Indian letters, Chinese potsherds of West Han, and a bronze mirror from West Han. A Chinese bronze seal found near the site was engraved with four Chinese letters in the grid. This type of seal was an official one given to the subjects by the Chinese Emperor as their status symbols, and can be dated to the first half of the second century BCE. A gold pendant of *Shuangyuwen* 雙魚文 (double-fish motif) that is also traditional in Chinese art style has also been found. The inhabitants at Khao Sam Kheo and other bases near the isthmus obviously had relations with Chinese, Indians, and Southeast Asians.

Foreign traders such as Indians and Chinese came to Southeast Asia to buy raw materials for luxury goods such as ivory, rhinoceros horn, jade, pearl, tortoiseshell, feathers of the halcyon, many kind of incenses such as agalloch, and spices such as pepper, clove, and nutmeg. They were all specialties of Southeast Asia. The Chinese came to Southeast Asia to barter gold and Chinese silk with Southeast Asian specialties and Roman glass. Indians came to barter Indian beads, high tin bronze bowls [Bennet and Glover 1992], and precious goods made in India [Glover 1996]. European and Persian goods were imported into India, and some of them were again exported to Southeast Asia. Several goods were re-made or changed in India before exporting to Southeast Asia such as Roman gold coins found at Oc-eo and Persian silver bowl [Nitta 2000, 2006].

Archaeological finds mentioned above show that active internal and international trade was moving in Southeast Asia before the Indianization.

2. Chinese Presence in Southeast Asia before Indianization

The people of Southeast Asia had active private trade with each other, and Southeast Asian countries came to have official diplomatic relations with Chinese dynasties

before the Indianization process started. The histories of Chinese dynasties reported the arrival of trade missions from foreign countries. At the first stage from the second century BCE to the third century CE, trade missions from Rome, India, Myanmar, and Java came to China. Southeast Asian traders developed their private trade without contact with Chinese dynasties.

At the second stage, from the early third century when Emperor Sun Quan of the Wu Dynasty sent his two officials to Funan [Wada 1983; Watabe 1985] in 421 CE when the Southern Song Dynasty began, China and Southeast Asian countries began to have diplomatic and commercial relations with each other. After the Jin Dynasty began in 265 CE, Southeast Asian countries dispatched their diplomatic embassies one after another.

At the third stage when the Southern Song Dynasty was founded in 421 CE, many countries of Southeast Asia sent the embassies to China. Lyn-I and Funan sent the embassies many times. Also, several countries on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, and those of the islands such as Java, Sumatra, and Bali, began to dispatch their embassies to China. Funan and Lyn-I were rivals. Funan asked the emperor of Song to protect their ships and cargoes from Lyn-I's attack and capture two times—in 430 and 484 CE, according to *Songshu* 宋書 (the book of Song). Some countries in Southeast Asia hoped that the Chinese dynasty showed the presence to develop the trade safely and smoothly and to construct the international order in Southeast Asian countries. Southern Chinese dynasties after the Song dynasty dealt with them to make the international order between the countries by appointing them as kings, generals, and other government officials [Nitta 2013b: 35-37, and Table 1].

Before Dvaravati, not only was their sea trade active but also the diplomatic and the political activities expanded backed by the Chinese dynasty's authority.

3. Emergence of Dvaravati Cities

As the trade with India and China became active, import/export centres were formed on the coast of the Gulf of Thailand. An ivory comb decorated with Buddhist motifs was found in Chensen, a moated village near Lopburi, in the first century BCE. There were three routes from India to Southeast Asia. The first one was through the Isthmus of Kra from the Bay of Bengal to Takuapa, a port on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. The second one was the route that crossed the peninsula from Trang on the west coast to Songkhla on the east coast. The third one was through the Malacca Strait. The first one was the most important. When Indian traders came to the Gulf of Thailand through the Isthmus of Kra, they crossed it by land, and had to be again on board on the east coast of the peninsula. The west coast of the Gulf of Thailand is near important ports on the east coast, such as Chaiya and Surat Thani.

Cities were constructed on the west coast of the Gulf of Thailand as trade centres. Khu Bua, U-Thong, and Nakhon Chaisri were the most important cities on the west coast. A silver coin with a conch motif found at Ban Khok, 1 km north-east of U-Thong, was inscribed with the letters of *Lavapura* [Boisselier 1972: 52]. ‘Lava’ means ‘Lavo’, and ‘pura’ means ‘town’ or ‘city’. This shows that cities were constructed during the Dvaravati period. Great *stupas* were constructed during those cities. From the sixth century, such port cities were constructed one after another on the coast from the west to the east. On the east coast, Don Si Mahapot was the largest one where a cistern for holy water, many Buddhist temples, and Hindu shrines were constructed inside as well the outside of the city.

The trade routes stretched from the coast to the inland for commodities of international trade. Local villages had developed to become cities as local trade centres along the trade routes and the intersections. Local moated villages changed to become cities in the basins of Tachin and Chaophraya rivers, in central Thailand and along the routes between central and north east Thailand. Lavo was the former, and Si Thep and Muang Sema were the latter. The trade routes stretched further to north-east Thailand where the forest products, main commodities for export outside Southeast Asia, were collected. Local moated villages in north-east Thailand had developed to become cities as supply centres of the forest products when trade was becoming more active (Figs. 3.2 and 3.10).

The powerful Dvaravati cities were encircled by moats and walls. Buddhist temples, *stupas*, and *dharmachakras* were erected. Sema stones were erected around the temples and the *stupas* as boundary markers. Many kinds of votives, such as silver coins, gold leaves, and beads were buried under the foundation of the temples. Not only Theravada Buddhism but also Mahayana Buddhism was practised. Hinduism was also accepted.

Theravada Buddhism was the principal religion. They constructed temples and *stupas* around the city, erected *dharmachakras*, worshipped the *buddhapada* and Buddha images, and encircled the temples and the *stupa* with Sema stones. These Buddhist archaeological elements are distributed throughout the Dvaravati region.

As mentioned earlier, Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism were also accepted. Buddhism and Hinduism were sometimes confused one for the other. Hindu god images, *lingas*, and *yonis* were found in many Dvaravati cities such as U-Thong, Nakhon Chaisri, and Si Thep [Saraya 1999; FAD 2007].

4. Dvaravati Cities in Five Areas

Dvaravati cities are distributed in five areas. They are the west coast of the Gulf of Thailand, the east coast of it, the Chaophraya basin, the north-east and north Thailand [Nitta 2005].

4.1. *Cities on the West Coast of the Gulf of Thailand*

U-Thong was constructed in the sixth century [FAD 2007]. It is a city with an irregular rectangular plan, 1,600 m E-W and 840 m N-S. U-Thong was quite prosperous in the seventh century, but declined opposed by the prosperity of Nakhon Chaisri in the eleventh century. Several *stupas* were erected inside and outside the city. There are found lot of stucco images, stone *dharmachakras*, and Buddha images. Hinduism was also believed. *Mukhalingas* or *lingas* with Siva's face, were found in the city. A copper plate with the inscription in Pallava letters has also been found. Its inscription tells us that Harshavarman, grandson of Ishanavarman, dedicated a gems inlaid palanquin, parasols, and musical instruments to the Siva Linga [Indrawooth 1999:138; Saraya 1999: 26; FAD 2004: 52-53]. Many Srivatsa coins of Southeast Asia were also found in a pot with a copper coin of Marks Piavonius Victrinus (268-271), Emperor of the Gaul Empire in the third century, Arabian coins of the ninth century, and copper coins of Kaiyuan Tongbao 開元通寶 from 621 to 900 CE have been found in the basement of the temple at Khok Chang Din on the mountain near U-Thong. A *buddhapada* was also found on another mountain near U-Thong. Many temples were also built around U-Thong. A big reservoir was constructed on the foothills near U-Thong, from which water was supplied in the field.

Khu Bua was also important [FAD 1996]. It is a moated city that has an irregular rectangular plan, and is 2,000 m E-W and 800 m N-S. It had a connection with the Mekron River and the gulf by a stream that runs through the city. A big *stupa* is situated in the centre of the city. A gold box containing a gold container was found in one of the five holes dug in the foundation. Many stucco images were also collected, some of which includes Bodhisattvas. Hence, Mahayana Buddhism was also practised (Fig. 3.3).

The most important city was Nakhon Chaisri [FAD 1999b]. It was a big moated city with an irregular rectangular plan. It measures 3,700 m E-W and 2,000 m N-S. It was situated near the former seashore of the Gulf of Thailand. Large *stupas* and temples were constructed inside and outside the city. Chulaphathom and Praphatom *stupas* are the biggest ones in Nakhon Chaisri. Two silver coins with the letters *sridvaravatisuvarnapunya* inscribed on it were found under the base. Mahayana Buddhism was also accepted in the eighth century according to the stucco relief with an elephant with six ivories, that is an incarnation of Bodhisattva. Hinduism was worshipped here because *lingas* and *yonis* were also found there (Fig. 3.4).

4.2. *Cities on the East Coast of the Gulf of Thailand*

Don Si Mahapot, on the east coast, was a large moated city with an irregular rectangular city plan. This city was situated near the seashore at that time. Buddhist temples, Hindu shrines, and a big cistern containing water for religious ceremonies

were constructed inside and outside the city. Sa Morakot site, 2 km south of Don Si Mahapot, is also very important for the acceptance of Buddhism on the east coast. A unique *buddhapada* with *dharmachakra* engraved on the ground was also found. A Buddhist temple was constructed over them in the age of Jayavarman VII in the thirteenth century (Fig. 3.5).

4.3. *Cities in the Chaophraya Basin*

In the Dvaravati period, the seashore of the gulf was set back from the present one. From the coastal areas, the trade routes stretched further to north-east Thailand in two ways. Lavo was an important city situated in the remotest part of the gulf. This city had an irregular circular plan. One trade route stretched from Lavo to north-east Thailand via Si Thep, Petchabun Province. Near Lavo, Chensen was also an important city. An ivory comb engraved with Buddhist motifs was found here. The people of Chensen practised Buddhism. Lavo played an important role in the trade between the coastal areas and the inland. Many rising sun coins were found around Lavo (Fig. 3.6).

4.4. *Cities in Northeast Thailand and between the Chaophraya Basin and the North-east*

In north-east Thailand, many moated villages were constructed mainly in the Mun River basin from the Iron Age period [Higham and Thosarat 2012]. The people selected a little elevated land to live to avoid water damage during the rainy season. They controlled the water and protected themselves from floods by digging moats around the village. Before Dvaravati, population growth occurred in north-east Thailand in the third century BCE as evident from archaeological sources. As they dug moats by setting the natural landform, the village plan was usually an irregular circular. Some of these moated villages maintained trade relations with coastal centres via transit stations, and developed to become local centres.

Another trade route was from the coast to north-east Thailand via Muang Sema, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Many Sema stones are distributed around the city as its name suggests. Muang Sema is situated in the south-west corner of the north-east which is one of the gates to the north-east. Muang Sema was a usual moated village in the Iron Age and developed to become a large city encircled by a moat and city walls. As the population grew, it was extended to the north. This extension was also encircled by a moat and walls. In the city, a small Buddhist temple was erected. One of the biggest Buddha images in Dvaravati and a *dharmachakra* were installed outside of the city. Muang Sema became the capital of a local Hindu kingdom, Sri Chanasa (Chanasapura), in the ninth century according to the inscription of Bo Ika

found in the pond in the centre of the city which recorded that the king erected a gold *linga* here.

Si Thep was a circular moated village belonging to the Iron Age. There were other moated villages in the north-east [FAD 1999a]. After it developed to become a relay city of trade between the coast and north-east Thailand in the Dvaravati period, it was extended to the east by rapid population growth. The extension is rectangular and moated. Many Buddha images, Hindu god images such as that of Vishnu, Siva, and Krishna, and *lingas*, and *yonis* have been found in the city which show that both Buddhism and Hinduism flourished in Si Thep. A big *stupa* has been here, with a dharmachakra erected in front of the *stupa*. A great *stupa* at Khok Klang Nok, 2 km north of Si Thep, shows that there were elites rich enough to construct such a great Buddhist monument. It seems that they had made their fortune through trade (Fig. 3.7).

Muang Fa Daet, situated in Kalasin Province, was one of the biggest cities in the middle of north-east Thailand. On the basis of the pottery found in the tombs, it is evident that two small moated villages existed in the third century BCE. In the Dvaravati period, a huge moat was dug enclosing them. Two Sema stones with Pallava letters were found in one of the villages. A lot of Sema stones, some of which were engraved with scenes from the Jataka tales, were collected in the city. One big *stupa* and three small ones were constructed at the north-east corner of the city (Fig. 3.8).

4.5. City in North Thailand

Haripunjaya was a northern centre of the Mons from the eleventh to the thirteenth century [Indrawooth 1999, 2004; Indrawooth et al. 1993]. Legend has it that a member of the royal family excited from Lavo along with other people from Lavo came and settled here. It is located near River Pin that flowed through Chiangmai from northern mountains. Wat Haripunjaya was constructed in the centre of the city. Many epigraphies have been found here.

With active trade between India and the Gulf of Thailand through the Isthmus of Kra, trade routes developed up to the west coast of the gulf near the Isthmus. Import/export centres were built along the coast in the sixth century. They combined to form polities. Trade routes stretched from the ports of the coast to the inland villages. Dvaravati culture also spread by trade routes.

5. Three Types of Dvaravati Cities

The Dvaravati cities are divided into three types on the basis of function of trade activities and the city plan [Nitta 2005; 2013a: 41; 2013b: 41]. Type A was an international trade centre on the coast. Type B was a relay station of the trade between

the coast and the inland. Type C was a supply base of the forest products in north-east Thailand. The city plans of these three types are very different. The first group such as Khu Bua is irregular rectangular influenced by the Indian ideal city planning. The second group such as Si Thep is irregular circular with rectangular enlarged area. This was a measure devised to deal with its population growth. The third group mainly distributed in north-east Thailand is irregular circular. It kept the city plan of the traditional local villages of north-east Thailand. When these three types of cities that shared each function were connected by the trade routes, the trading activities of Dvaravati began to be going smoothly. It is true that commerce was one of the important industries in Dvaravati, as *Xin Tangshu* told us.

6. Coinage and Economy of Dvaravati

Innumerable coins have been found at the sites of Dvaravati [Itō 2001]. They are the same ones as those found at the sites of Pyu (Myanmar) and Funan (Cambodia and south Vietnam). Dvaravati coins are usually made of silver and rarely gold (not pure gold but electrum). Coins of Southeast Asia had their origin in the cities on the coast of Martaban and Srikshetra in Myanmar from the first to the fourth centuries. In the fifth century, coins with rising sun motif on the front and *srivatsa* motif on the reverse began to be made at Halin in upper Myanmar [Mahlo 2012]. This type of coin (rising sun coin) is widely distributed in Myanmar, Thailand, and south Vietnam. They are divided into four types on the size and their weight. There were four denominations of coins; standard unit was 10 g, and smaller units were 1/4 unit, 1/20 unit, and 1/100 unit. They were made by punching a silver blank (Fig. 3.9).

Coins found in Dvaravati sites had a motif of *srivatsa* on the front and a motif of conch shell on the reverse. This type of coin was first made in the fourth century at Bago where the Mons lived. Dvaravati coins that have the motif of a concentric circle on the top of a conch shell can be dated to the ninth century [Mahlo 2012]. The standard unit of coin was 10 g. There were 20 g coins and smaller ones than the standard ones. Coins cut into halves, four and eight equal parts were circulated because they had no smaller denominations. Almost all the silver coins of Dvaravati were made by punching, but some coins were made by casting because clay or stone moulds to cast coin were discovered in Dvaravati sites such as Nakhon Chaisri, Lavo, and a village in the Tachin River basin. It is very strange that only one or two coins were inscribed on the mould. Moulds to cast coins of Dvaravati are very different from those of China which were able to cast a lot of coins at one time. Dvaravati did not need huge amounts of coins according to its mint system. This means that cities of Dvaravati were not in monetary economy, but the coinage of Dvaravati was very limited in the trade on the coast. Coins seemed not to be circulated for the people's everyday life, but for the settlement of trade [Nitta 2013a: 29]. According to *Xin Tangshu*, coins were issued by the government.

7. Dvaravati Crossed River Mekong

The Dvaravati culture penetrated into the northern part of north-east Thailand. Phu Prabat site located in the forests of the mountain, Udon Tani Province was a centre of the forest sect, and many meditation rooms made of stones and Sema stones were erected around them.

Dvaravati culture penetrated to Laos crossing the Mekong River from north-east Thailand. Sema stones of north-east Thailand and those of Laos have the same features. Those of north-east Thailand have relieves of scenes of Jataka, *stupa*, and flower vase [Na Paknam 1981]. Those of Lao have relieves of *stupa* and flower vase. Field survey carried by Nitta in 2011 discovered many Sema stones of Dvaravati style in Laos [Nitta 2013a: 40-41]. They are distributed in Vientiane and the suburbs of Savannakhet. Sema stones of Dvaravati style are erected at Wat Dansun Na Nga in Ban Na Nga north of Vientiane. A lot of Sema stones with relieves of *stupa* and flower were found at Ban Na Muang, Ban Si Khai, and Ban Khan north of Savannakhet. Furthermore a gold box whose cover was decorated with motifs of three men, and a gold *kendi* (holy water container with a spout), were found in the moated village at Ban Phua Tong, Saiburi district, north of Savannakhet. A Sema stone with a *stupa* motif was also found in the village. Dvaravati culture reached and penetrated into Laos on the archaeological evidence.

Conclusion

Before the Indianization, prestigious goods and raw materials were actively traded on the trade networks in Southeast Asia not later than the third century BCE. Population growth occurred at their intersections. Once the trade networks in Southeast Asia were connected with Indian and Chinese trade routes, cities came into existence. Cities of Dvaravati on the coast, the transit, and the inland developed for efficient cargo collection system on the active trade between Southeast Asia and India.

* Figs. 3.3-3.8 and Fig. 3.10 are based on Google earth 2013.

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Fig. 3.1

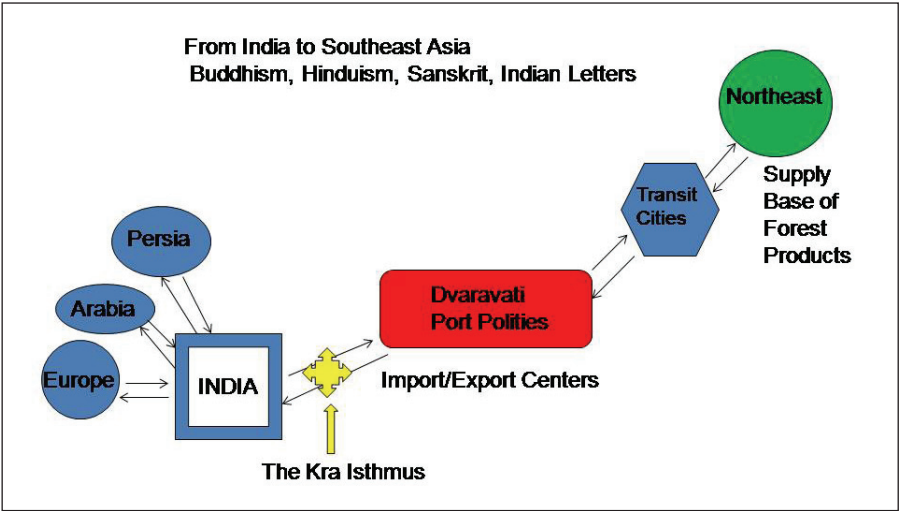


Fig. 3.2: Relations of Trade between India and Dvaravati

First Polities on the West Coast

Cities encircled with moat and wall were formed on the west coast of the gulf of Thailand, the terminal of trade route via the Kra Isthmus by sea from India



U-Thong



Kubua

Fig. 3.3

Port Polity on the Central Coast

Trade route run along the coast to the central one of the Gulf of Thailand from the west.

Nakhon Chaisri, one of the most important polity, was formed.

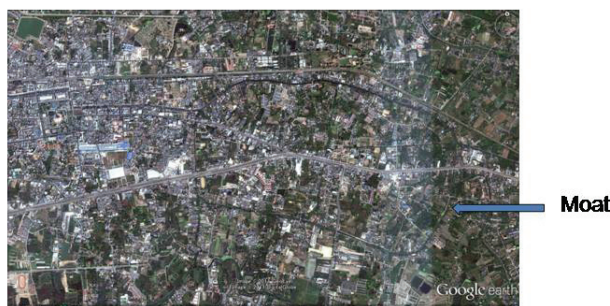


Fig. 3.4

Port Polity on the East Coast

Trade routes ran to the east coast.

Don Si Mahapot, one of the most important port polities on the east coast, was formed.



Fig. 3.5

Polity of the Central Plain

Trade route run further inland from the coastal area to the central plain.

Lavo, one of the most important cities in the central plain was formed.

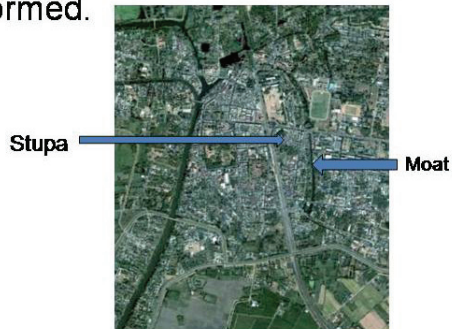


Fig. 3.6

Cities along the Trade Route
between the Coast and the Northeast

Great Stupa at Khao Klang Nok



Si Thep
(Petchabun Province)



Muang Sema
(Nakhon Ratchasima Province)

Fig. 3.7

City in the Center of the Northeast

Trade route penetrated further into the
Northeast.

Northeast was the supply
base of forest products as
exports.

Muang Fa Daet grew up
to become a center of
the Northeast
from two moated villages.



Kalasin Province

Fig. 3.8

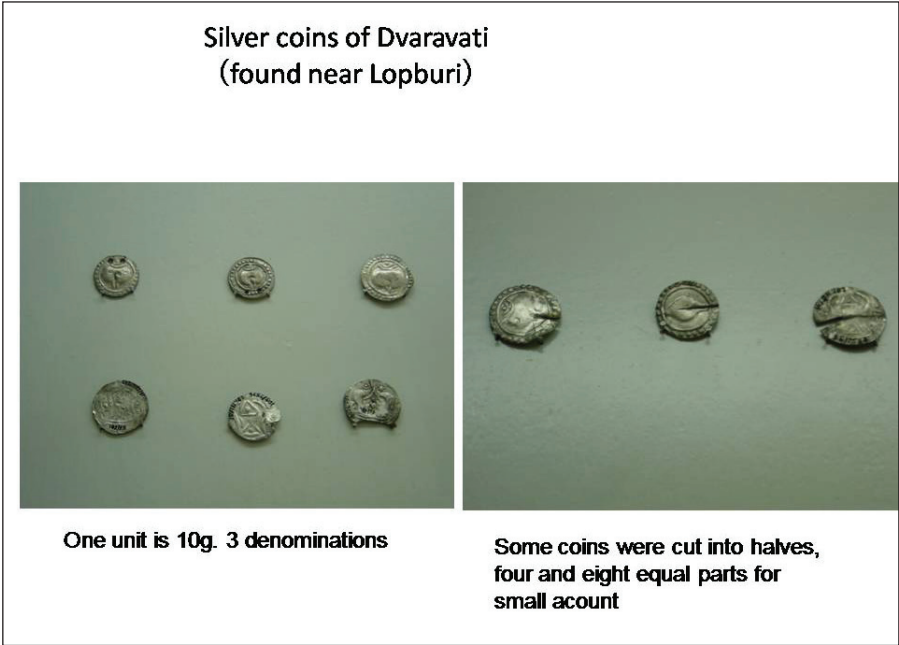


Fig. 3.9

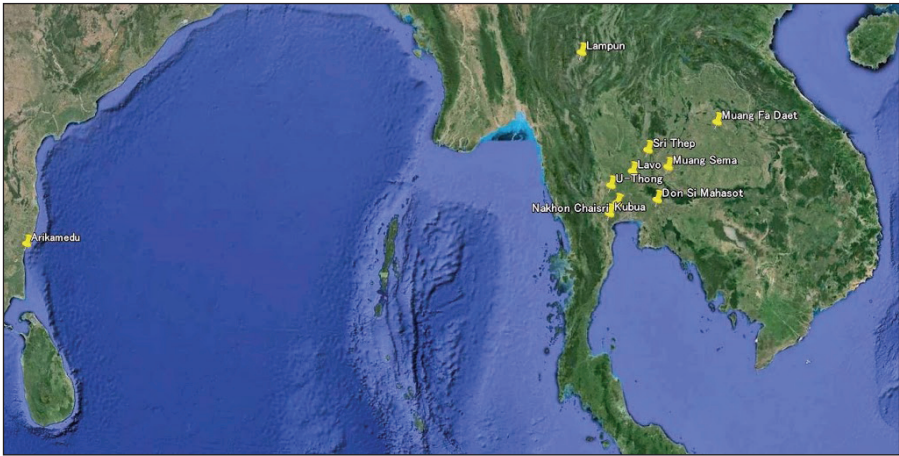


Fig. 3.10: Dvaravati Cities and Arikamedu